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CANADA'S ACTUAL CONDITION

To my article in the February number of this Magazine on "The Disintegration of Canada," Mr. Watson Griffin has done me the honor of a reply, under the title of "The Consolidation of Canada." While my critic exhibits ability and moderation in his paper, he does not contribute much to the disproof of my facts, or the rebuttal of my arguments. Indeed, most of my points and assertions with reference to the present condition of the British North American provinces, the feelings of the people of each, their material and financial condition, with its disappointments and effects, and the prevalent social and other evils, have been skipped by unnoticed for sketches of confederation, Canadian parties under new names, the different national elements of the population, North-west matters, etc. I enjoy narratives and disquisitions on such subjects, however remote from the course of my facts and arguments, but they would carry greater weight if free from strong party coloring and more closely connected with the questions discussed. With the exception of the liberal space devoted to the few paragraphs I occupied with the Riel affair, Mr. Griffin has spent his force on only two or three minor points of my article, showing in the handling of them a hypercritical spirit. I need at present supply only one example. He objects to my application of the word "British" to the English-speaking population of the Dominion, and elaborately analyzes its elements to show that the majority are not of "English descent;" that the Irish, as to numbers, come before the English, the Scotch after the latter, or fourth, and the Germans fifth, on the census returns. In new countries, like Canada, possessing a mixed population, national designations are not ordinarily used with perfect accuracy; and for brevity, large, comprehensive appellations are preferred, particularly when such bonds of connection as race relationship and a common language can be pointed to. Everybody in the Dominion wishing to distinguish the French-speaking from the English-speaking inhabitants usually applies to the latter the designation "British," however well aware of the composite nature of this section of the population. But even precisians, I believe, would include Scotch with English, under this term, while North of Ireland people, largely descended from those races, and they are very numerous, in Ontario especially, would feel anything but insulted by this title. Since a large portion of the adults of the English-speaking prov-

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inches are immigrants from the United Kingdom, there is the less inappropriateness in the name of "British," though in strict definition "British Canadians" may be the preferable term for their children. "The most intelligible terms are Canadians and French Canadians," says Mr. Griffin; but any one acquainted with the habits of the people of the Dominion knows that, in speaking of the great sections separately, the word "Canadian" is generally applied to the French, "British" being used to cover all of British and Irish origin. I thought, moreover, England and Ireland were styled Great Britain. The inhabitants of Canada could properly be called "Canadians," which term may, in future, be still more employed.

I will not pick holes in Mr. Griffin's narrative for the purpose of fault-finding, but I deem it right to correct important errors calculated to mislead certain of your readers not well versed in Dominion affairs. At the outset he states confederation was carried by a narrow majority in most of the provinces. Well, in the Legislature of Upper and Lower Canada, the principal provinces, it was carried in 1865 by 91 to 33; and although rejected in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, at first, it was adopted a year or so after, so as to allow the New Dominion to be proclaimed on 1st July, 1867. I will not notice at length the way in which my opponent disposes of the old and well-known Canadian parties. *Bleus*, Tories and Conservatives, are now labeled "Dominionists," while *Rouges*, Clear Grits and Liberals, are transformed into "Provincialists." I admit the distinction has the charm of novelty, but it is largely fanciful and misleading. The leaders of those old parties would not know themselves under the new names. The distinction does not clear up the question, as there are many in each party holding political and constitutional views which, according to this discrimination, would entitle them to be ranked with the opposite, with the main principles of which they entertain no sympathy whatever. For example, though the Liberals, in accordance with the Federal constitution, oppose undue interference with provincial affairs by the general government at Ottawa, they aim at no invasion of Federal rights or assault upon Federal interests. Nor would the Quebec French Tories favor Ottawa interference with their provincial rights or prejudices even, all the local authorities, in fact, feeling alike in this respect.

The ill-feeling that has prevailed between the Liberal Ontario government and the Dominion Conservative government for several years forms a serious obstacle to Canadian progress as well as a solid menace to confederation. The Dominion premier feels thwarted by Ontario ministerial opposition in regard to local measures and questions. If the "Dominionists" wish to speedily wreck the actual Federal constitution, they

will attempt to appropriate rights or powers belonging to the provinces. The present union is borne with impatience enough by large numbers in all the provinces; it is still on trial, many seriously doubting its permanence, unless great improvement in the circumstances and temper of the people takes place, while a closer, a legislative union would prove but the signal for an early break-up of the Dominion.

We are told that the "Dominionists" have been in power ever since confederation, with the exception of five years, and "while all their hopes have not been realized, much has been accomplished; and nothing but a one-sided study of events could make any unprejudiced person believe that the Dominion is undergoing a process of disintegration." It is gratifying to see my opponent admit any Conservative or Dominion failure, but in view of the facts I mentioned in my first article, touching Canadian provincial jars and race troubles, the serious and long-continued business distress, the enormous increase of the public debt, about trebled since confederation, the almost stand-still condition of the population of late years, even in progressive Ontario, the declining condition of Quebec, the deficits in the revenue of that and other provinces, and of the Dominion revenue itself, Mr. Griffin might have been more candid in this avowal. Regarding "the political consolidation of the country," "fast bringing about material consolidation, and the growth of national sentiment . . . commensurate to the progress that has been made," I shall mention some things rather in conflict with my critic's assumptions and accompanying conclusions. He cites the railway and canal connections made of late years, to impress upon us the extent and greatness of the material ties, so prolific of other advantages. The list of new railways includes the Grand Trunk, with its 2,694 miles; Great Western, with about 800 miles, and other shorter roads, the greater portion of which were constructed and working at the date of confederation. Mr. Brydges, for many years manager of the Grand Trunk Railway, reported in 1875 that the mileage of the then existing Canadian railways reached 4,957 miles. Mr. Griffin was, therefore, "hasty" in asserting that, "at the time of confederation, Canada was almost without railways;" and also in including the Welland Canal in recent works, it having been made so long ago as 1829. The Intercolonial and Canadian Pacific have been constructed since the Union, the former costing some \$35,000,000, and, as yet, hardly paying expenses; the success of the latter still remaining to be proven. It has cost the Dominion some \$55,000,000 to \$60,000,000, and though it is paying back now \$20,000,000 of the late government \$30,000,000 loan, Sir Richard Cartwright, Finance Minister for the Liberal Government from 1873 to 1878,

asserts that this offer means but 60 cents on the dollar, and contends for the hundredth time that the road has greatly injured Canada, enormously increasing its debt, and preventing a moderately rapid settlement of the North-west by the various evils of a heartless monopoly. The Liberals still insist it was built unnecessarily through the 600 miles of hyperborean wilderness north of Lake Superior, and through hundreds of miles of alkali and other wastes, possessing no population but wandering bands of savages west of Manitoba, this side the Rocky Mountains. Now what is the basis of the local freight trade for this immense and costly railway, in the 700 miles between Manitoba and the Rockies? According to a recent government report, the total population in the North-west Territories is 48,362. The output of grain last year was 1,147,124 bushels wheat, 1,045,950 bushels oats, 257,479 bushels of barley, and 479,702 bushels of potatoes. The capital invested in all industries is \$771,451; the value of raw materials used, \$518,428, and of articles produced, \$1,029,235. Comment is needless!

Manitoba is credited with a population of 200,000, which all unprejudiced thinkers consider a very poor exhibit for fifteen years of colonization, with all the aid of United States North-west Railways, free grants of rich prairie soil, unlimited puffing, government stimuli of all kinds, etc. Besides, Winnipeg was a well-known old Hudson Bay post, advantageously situated for trade and colonization, which should to-day have 60,000 instead of but 30,000 citizens. The land for miles around it is locked up in the hands of selfish speculators, leaving only a score or two of farmers where hundreds should be raising large crops and helping on the progress of the whole district. Monopoly has also oppressed and discouraged the people and driven many thousands to Dakota, now half Canadian, and to other sections of the United States North-west.

After taking a *couleur de rose* view of the "amicable relations that really now exist between the French and English speaking citizens of Montreal," Mr. Griffin says: "Undoubtedly it would be far better for Canada if the French-Canadians would intermarry with the rest of the population and adopt the English language, but there are no indications of that. This generation certainly will not see a fusion of the two races, but there is no reason to expect that the people will not live amicably side by side, etc." I think nothing could more effectively justify the views I propounded in February last in regard to the discordant, the refractory elements of the Canadian population, the extreme difficulty of assimilating them, as evinced by the admittedly slow progress of this work in a whole century, than such a confession. He further on adds that Riel's fate and

connected events will have upon this race an excellent disciplinary effect, for they "have been taught that they are only a part of the Canadian people, and that the laws of the Dominion will not be set aside at the dictation of mob orators; moreover, they are likely to take more interest in the management of North-west affairs in the future, and this will be the means of lifting them out of their narrow, provincial rut." But I differ from Mr. Griffin. I do not believe the French-Canadians needed or deserved any harsh discipline of their moral sense, much less any violence to their natural feelings. Nor can the spirit displayed by my critic on the policy confessed have any other effect than the aggravation of existing differences and prejudices, and the further postponement of that union and mutual respect between the chief Canadian races, which would undoubtedly benefit them largely.

But what could look more extraordinary than the following assertion? "The only question that ever threatened trouble was the hanging of Riel, and the excitement over that has almost entirely subsided without any evil effects." Really it is difficult to imagine that Mr. Griffin lives in Montreal! Riel's execution forms at present writing the subject of a momentous debate in the local Parliament of Quebec. And did it not occupy the Dominion Parliament a large part of last March? many predicting a government defeat, although it was subsequently sustained by a majority of 94. The vote, however, was not a strictly party one, over 20 Liberals approving the government action in this matter and many French-Canadians condemning it. The Liberal leader, Hon. Mr. Blake, denounced Riel's hanging in a magnificent five hours' speech, his French-Canadian colleague, Hon. Mr. Laurier, making an oration of several hours' length, on the same side. The speech of the latter has been pronounced by many persons the finest made at Ottawa since confederation. Even before this great impressive parliamentary protest against ministerial action there were abundant evidences of French-Canadian dissatisfaction with the North-west policy, and of a sense of injustice and soreness which would produce important results for many a day, certainly till after the next election. Mr. Griffin tells us also that neither Riel nor the half-breeds appealed to the government, an assertion completely disproved by the statements and events of the Riel controversy as well as by the speeches of clergymen and members of Parliament. Since last November, I, too, believe that by even tardy attention to the Metis petitions, by a good prospect of redress even a few weeks before the Duck Lake catastrophe, the insurrection could have been prevented; but, as Mr. Laurier too truly and pathetically exclaimed in his famous speech, it was then "*too late, too late.*" And the Dominion

is paying a terrible price in blood and treasure for this indifference to the claims of a portion of her people—the \$8,000,000 lost give but a faint idea of the money sacrifice.

Here is an equally strange statement: “. . . There is no evidence the Orangemen interfered in the matter, in any way.” Every one in Canada knows that the Orangemen were deeply interested in the Riel execution, on account of the latter ordering the shooting of one of their members, Scott, in 1870, and that the government at Ottawa feared the effect upon this powerful organization of a commutation of sentence. I have seen resolutions of one Lodge in Ontario calling for the hanging, and I have a copy of those of a Manitoba Lodge, No. 1406, passed at Morris, October 22 last, ending as follows: “Resolved also: That should the government yield to French rule and draw upon itself the contempt of all civilized society, we can only say, ‘What portion have we with such a government?’ ‘To thy tents! O Israel.’ ‘Now see to thy house.’ ‘No loyal man can ever again rush to the rescue of such a despicable body, unworthy the name of government.’”

In the paragraph beginning, “Canada is not a paradise, nor will it ever be,” we are told “it has its peculiar troubles, as other countries have; but nowhere else are prosperity and liberty, without license, more general. The standard of the judiciary is very high, lynch law is never heard of, even in the new settlements, and divorces are almost unknown.” I am happy to bear testimony to the absence of the two latter evils, which reflects creditably upon the sound moral sentiment of the majority. Long may this condition of things prevail! As to the judiciary, it is also but fair to state that, although most of the appointments are governed by political influence and personal objects, Canada has many honest and efficient judges. Nobody, however, imagines that were the Dominion to link her political fortunes with this republic, her moral degradation would immediately ensue. Not to scrutinize Canadian ways, political and other practices, too closely, it is to be feared that there is a good deal of glass in the Canadian House—that political corruption, including the bribing of members of Parliament, and other party supporters, at the expense of the public resources, timber limits, ranches, contracts, and fat sinecures, East and West, is a vice rather prevalent at Ottawa, not to mention Quebec, where the corruptions and iniquities of the famous Chapleau government nearly ruined that province. Able and upright members in both Parliaments, men of veracity and high personal character, give names and particulars in support of such charges against the government, on the strength of official returns and other reliable information.

In reference to Mr. Griffin's attempt to combat a portion of my statement in regard to the condition of the provinces to the North, their progress in population and taxation, as compared with the taxation of the United States, information that has since been published, including the budget speech of the Canadian Finance Minister, Hon. Mr. McLelan, and the reply of Sir Richard Cartwright, shows most forcibly that I have understated, and not overstated, my case. For the sake of brevity, I will notice but a few telling and suggestive facts in this connection. For instance, Newfoundland's revenue this year has fallen short of the estimates by \$107,000, accompanying an over-expenditure during the same period; Nova Scotia renews her demands in decidedly emphatic terms for an increase of subsidy from the Dominion government; and the discontent prevailing in New Brunswick, Newfoundland, and Prince Edward's Island against the Dominion Government is notorious to all who read the papers from those provinces. The opposition of the Maritime province people to United States vessels landing and shipping fish in bond to the Republic may lead to trouble between both countries and a serious controversy between Canada and England. Another difficulty which may prove a great strain on the Federal bond is Ontario's threat to demand reparation from the Ottawa government for assistance to railways of other provinces, having built her own unaided. And besides, the smaller, poorer provinces have contracted the habit of rushing to the Dominion, hat in hand, for additional subsidy, when need strikes, the concession of which increases the general taxation, demoralizes the suppliants, and affords the reigning Ministers mischievous opportunities of political corruption, of which the Ottawa Government has fully availed itself. Local blundering and extravagance are thus dangerously encouraged.

Then as to the growth of the Canadian population, truth compels the reiteration of assertions not complimentary to the Canadian system and policy since confederation. The population has declined in some of the provinces, and in others it is of slow growth, if not of the stand-still character. The smaller population is unquestionably due to emigration to the United States. A late number of *The Chicago Times* says on the subject: ". . . There are now living in the North-eastern States more than 750,000 persons—native Canadians—who have settled there within a comparatively short period, and in the North-western States and Territories over 500,000. . . . In addition to this there are on the Pacific slope about 50,000 more, raising the total to 1,300,000, which is more than one-fourth of the present population of the Dominion." I may add that Sir Richard, in his speech on the budget, last month, put the number of Canadians in the

United States, up to the present, at two millions, denouncing the extravagance, corruption, and general misgovernment of the Dominion, with its high tariff and neglected resources, as the chief cause of this enormous loss. With a debt of nearly \$300,000,000, and a large deficit this year, with additional taxation, to pay for the late provoked rebellion, monopolies like the Canadian Pacific Railway, and such unprofitable works as the Intercolonial Railway, etc., it was no wonder, he argued, that Canadians became discouraged, and left for homes in a country possessing much greater resources and population, a boundless new territory free to all, a declining debt, and the grandest prospects that ever stirred the imagination. Annexing Canadians at the present rate leaves the annexation of their country only a question of time!

My opponent thinks me wrong in saying that, however injured in feeling a provincial minority may be, or however threatened with injustice by the majority, the kindred or sympathizing majority of no other province can help it; each majority is independent as to local and municipal affairs. He cites the veto power, to disallow any objectionable or unjust local act, resting with the Dominion Ministry. But offense and injury to remote minorities can be given indirectly, and without glaring violations of the Union Act; besides, party loyalty is a powerful force, and Federal cabinets depending for support upon this or that province—Quebec, for example, will hesitate tremulously before offending such a valuable majority. On the other hand, the Ontario local majority, being hostile to the existing government at Ottawa, it has promptly disallowed acts it or its Ontario allies did not like, though the reasons for them were strong enough to secure their subsequent sanction by the highest tribunal, the Privy Council. Outrageous injustice by provincial majorities it would be foolish for them, under ordinary circumstances, to attempt; but the ways of irritating and over-riding a minority, of disregarding its most enlightened and sensible views, however large its stake in the country, are neither few nor impracticable, so long as the majority row in the same political boat with the ruling party at the Federal capital. Whatever the theory of the constitution, or its application under ordinary conditions, it is generally felt throughout the provinces that their best chance of the protection of minorities, so far apart as those of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, or Quebec, on the one side, Manitoba, or British Columbia, on the other, lies in the actual strength of each, not only in its own province, but its influence, by political alliance or other advantage, with either of the great parties at Ottawa. If weak in either region, the position of an offended or aggrieved minority will be the reverse of enviable.

My statement that the value of real property in Ontario fell \$30,000,000 last year, I find denied, with the accompanying allegation that "neither the Dominion nor Provincial Government published any statistics bearing on the value of real estate in Ontario last year." This "drop in the value of farm lands," to use the *ipsissima verba* of Sir Richard's Lucknow speech, was announced on the authority of the Bureau of Industries for Ontario. Such an enormous loss within one year, in the most prosperous province of the Dominion, he added, "has been partly balanced by the increase in the value of stock and implements in 1884."

In conclusion, I may observe that the continuance of the Canadian Federation depends mainly upon its financial condition, which cannot be satisfactory without economical administration of its means and resources, and wise legislation generally. For the last three years the farming, the largest interest, has not done well; prices of all agricultural products being low, debts and mortgages have increased extensively, many poor farmers abandoning old homesteads for work in the cities, or in this Republic. The ex-Finance Minister puts the fall in the prices of farm stuff at \$20,000,000 a year, \$100,000,000 worth being sold in the good times recently. Of the finances of the Dominion, he asserts the deficit of the current year should be stated at \$3,900,000, even allowing for the \$1,700,000 of the rebellion outlay charged to this year; \$38,500,000 was, as he understood it, the estimated outlay for the coming year, the \$3,500,000 to be paid for the rebellion to be charged improperly to capital account. The coming deficit would be \$4,900,000. In relation to Canadian trade, on the other hand, it has declined from \$207,000,000 in 1873, to \$183,868,000 in 1885! With such facts before him, and the enormous migration of Canadian and British emigrants from the Dominion to this Republic, with a taxation of \$6 a head in Canada as against \$4 in the United States, it is not strange that Sir Richard, allowing something for party coloring, considered the political and financial condition and prospects of his country most discreditable to the Canadian authorities.

The above summary of the leading facts of the Canadian financial situation of to-day closely resembles that I have already signalized in the February number of this Magazine, as threatening an early dissolution or material change of the actual constitutional system of the Dominion.

Prosper Bender

BOSTON, May, 1886.